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ABSTRACT

A study compared the organizational form and functional activities of the U.S. Cooperative Extension Service with agricultural extension activities in Sri Lanka and recommended ways of improving such programs in developing countries. Distinctive differences were found in the organizational set-up, subject-matter coverage, approach to clients, program planning process, staff recruitment and development, and participation of youth in the extension programs in each of the two countries. Policy recommendations formulated as a result of the study included the following: (1) a formal functional relationship should be established between agricultural extension and the higher education institutions; (2) policy decisions should be made by appropriate government agencies to free extension personnel from performing nonextension activities; (3) the number of subject-matter specialists should be increased; (4) advisory committees should be organized at each hierarchy level of the organizational structure of the agricultural extension; (5) an evaluation unit should be organized as a part of the agricultural extension organization; (6) extension programs should be carried out through organized farmer groups; (7) personnel competency levels should be improved through systematic staff recruitment and development; (8) promotion criteria should be established for all extension personnel; and (9) adequate working relationships should be established and maintained at local levels between agricultural extension and other public and private institutions. (MN)

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IMPLICATIONS OF THE U. S. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE FOR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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IMPLICATIONS OF THE U. S. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE FOR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The fundamental dilemma of most extension services in many developing countries is the inability of the extension organizations to be responsive to the needs of their clients and to the complexity of their problems. Those of us whose responsibility it is to reorganize those organizations are looking for models to follow and examples to emulate. The Cooperative Extension Service in the United States provides a wide range of possibilities to be used as guidelines for review, reorganization and development of the Agricultural Extension in many developing countries. A review of literature shows that agricultural extension in many developing countries such as Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and the Philippines posses unique organizational, functional similarities and problems (Auxinn, 1969; Swanson & Rassi, 1981). Many developing countries are attempting to modify their organizational format and functional activities in order to better serve the diverse needs of the communities (Adams, 1982). A vigorous attempt has been taken by the World Bank to help reorganize extension in some developing countries such as Sri Lanka, Nepal, and India by introducing the concept of Training and Visit System, T&V system, (Benor & Harrision, 1977). In fact, attempts have failed to meet the expectations of those developing countries as in Sri Lanka (Blankenburg, Sivayoganathan, Jayatileka, & Navaratnam, 1980). It is clear that many developing countries need appropriate organizational changes for the effective functions of their agricultural extension. Thus, this study proposed to determine what the implications of the Cooperative Extension Service in the United States are for the agricultural extension in developing countries (Navaratnam, 1982).

Purpose of this Study

The major purpose of this study was to determine the implications of the Cooperative Extension Service in the United States for agricultural extension in developing countries. The following specific objectives were accomplished:

1. To review the Cooperative Extension Service in the United States with special reference to its organizational form and functional activities.

2. To review agricultural extension in developing countries with special reference to Sri Lanka.

3. To recommend ways of improving the agricultural extension in developing countries.

Methodology

A descriptive research methodology was used in this study. Literatures pertaining to the Cooperative Extension Service in the United States was used to develop an understanding of its mission, philosophy, objectives, and organizational structure at national, state, and local levels. The Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension Service was purposively selected for this study. Even though there are 50 states Cooperative Extension Service in the United States, limited time and available resources restricted the consideration of more than one state for an in depth study. Multiple visits were made by the researcher to interview County Agents, District and State extension personnel to gather information on program planning, implementation, and evaluation and accountability of various extension programs as well as clients' participation in the Cooperative Extension program as a whole.

Based on the researcher's experience in agricultural extension in Sri Lanka and from available reports, literature and other relevant materials, information concerning the agricultural extension in Sri Lanka and other developing countries was studied. This study gathered information on the history, organizational structure, program planning processes, involvement of youth organizations, and problems encountered in agricultural extension.

Findings

Comparison of both the U.S.Cooperative Extension Service and agricultural extension in developing countries with special reference to Sri Lanka shows both differences and commonalities in the organizational structure and extension activities. There are distinctive differences between the two extension organizations in terms of organizational set-up, subject-matter coverage, approach to clients, program planning process, recruitment and development of staff, and participation of youth. The variations in stages of economic development, advancement in science and technology, number of people involved in agriculture, educational levels of farmers and extension personnel, different rate of adoption practices of new technology in agriculture, farm sizes and ownership are the major reasons for the observed differences. In spite of the above differences, the basic mission and institutional objectives are basically same.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn regarding the agricultural extension in developing countries:

1. A lack of a formal functional relationship between the agricultural extension and the higher education institutions such as universities limits the effectiveness of the agricultural extension.

2. The extension programs are developed at the national level and trickle down for implementation at the local level.

3. The lack of job descriptions for extension personnel contribute to confusions in their duties and responsibilities.

4. Non-extension duties performed by extension workers limit them to carry out educational functions of the agricultural extension.

5. Local level extension personnel do not receive adequate support from extension support system due to its inadequacy.

6. The agricultural extension generally does not involve organized clientele committees in program planning process.

7. The local extension personnel do not have input in the administrative functional components of agricultural extension.

8. Evaluation of extension programs are neglected in agricultural extension.

9. The methods of approach adopted in the agricultural extension lead to neglect of many clients.

10. Technical assistance provided by extension personnel to their clients is limited to agricultural production.

11. There is a considerable amount of gap in the total years of preservice training held by extension personnel at various levels.

12. Effectiveness of the agricultural extension activities is limited due to lack of inter and intra agency relationship between extension and other service organizations.

13. Youth activities have been neglected for many years.

Recommendations and Discussion

The study of organizational structure and functional activities of the Cooperative Extension Service in the United States and its comparison to the agricultural extension in Sri Lanka and other developing countries yield some useful information for the improvement of agricultural extension in developing countries. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

That a formal functional relationship be established between the agricultural extension and the higher education institutions.

Many agricultural extension of developing countries do not have functional relationship with the existing educational institutions. Establishing such a relationship between the agricultural extension and academic educational institutions will not only increase availability of resources and personnel but also help the extension organization to cover more subject matter in its activities. This will also assist in overcoming inadequate number of subject matter specialists in the organization.

That a policy decision be made by appropriate government agency to free extension personnel from performing non-extension activities.

The agricultural extension personnel in developing countries spent considerable amount of time on certain non-extension functions such as supply, marketing, and governance. This situation leads extension personnel to fail to perform their regular scheduled extension duties. Therefore, it is desirable to refrain from non-extension function to be effective in extension.

That the duties and responsibilities of extension personnel at various level be defined.

The lack of job descriptions for extension personnel, particularly at the local levels, leads to confusion of duties and responsibilities. Field level personnel belonging to various other service oriented institutions are duplicating the functions of the other. This may occur, sometime intentionally when the personnel make efforts to obtain credit from clients of agricultural extension.

That the number of subject matter specialists be increased.

The number and the availability of subject matter specialists in various areas of agriculture is far less than the number needed for successful implementation of extension programs. This situation is a very limiting factor in providing adequate professional help for local level extension personnel. In many cases, the local extension personnel are not trained to handle all needs and interests of their clients especially during the farming seasons. It is important to increase the number of subject matter specialists not only in agriculture, but also in other areas such as home economics and youth programs.

That advisory committees be organized at each hierarchy level of the organizational structure of the agricultural extension.

The agricultural extension in developing countries usually do not use organized clientele or farmer committees in program planning processes. Organizing such committees for agricultural extension will not only increase participation of local people and farmers but also increase the awareness of agricultural extension education program and the real needs and interests of its clients. Organizing such advisory

committees at various levels will increase the practicality and feasibility of extension programs to the local conditions.

That agricultural extension programs be developed and implemented at local levels.

The agricultural extension education programs are prepared at the national levels in many developing countries. Under these circumstances, much of the extension work for local extension personnel is directed towards things and ideas that the national level extension personnel understand and want rather than what the local extension personnel and clients desire and can do. Farmer's beliefs, values, habits, traditions, facts, and practices are not incorporated when the top-to-bottom level program planning is used. Since there are variations in the needs of local people from one area to another developing and implementing the extension educational programs at local levels should incorporate the real needs of clientele.

That an evaluation unit be organized as a part of the agricultural extension organization.

Organizing an evaluation unit as a part of the extension division will help guide extension personnel in performing their extension education programs useful for their clients. An evaluation unit will provide feedback information to program planners for introducing desired changes to improve the program planning processes and the contents of educational programs. An evaluation unit also helps maintain accountability and a reporting system to the interested government bodies and to the general public.

That agricultural extension education programs be carried out through organized farmer groups

The present agricultural extension education program in many developing countries emphasizes an individualized method of approach rather than group. This situation results in extension personnel neglecting many present and potential farmers. A group approach could be used to reach more farmers in a community and an individualized approach could be reserved for special assistances.

That demonstration technique be used as a primary teaching method.

The demonstration technique of teaching has been overlooked and is used rarely in delivering agricultural extension programs. The use of demonstration technique as the primary method will be more efficient and motivating in diffusing new innovations.

That the competency level of extension personnel be improved through a systematic staff recruitment and development.

At present, in many developing countries, technical assistance provided by extension workers is limited to agriculture production. Extension personnel should be able to guide, lead and assist farmers according to their needs and interests. Extension personnel must have a thorough knowledge and skills of new innovations. They should know how to work with farmers when an unexpected crisis occurs. All extension personnel should receive training in extension education, educational psychology, rural sociology, and farm management in addition to the knowledge required in technical agriculture. A continuous inservice training program to update the knowledge of extension personnel is essential.

That promotion criteria be established for all extension personnel.

There is an inconsistency and a gap in the total years of preservice training held by extension personnel. It is important to maintain a standard or criteria to promote extension personnel from one level to another. Such a standard is also important to facilitate flow of communication between various group of extension personnel.

That adequate working relationships be established and maintained at local levels between the agricultural extension and other private and public institutions at the local levels.

Effectiveness of local agricultural extension work has been hampered due to lack of working relationships and participation among various service oriented institutions at the local levels. Maintaining coordinated and integrated working relationships with other institutions in carrying out the extension education programs will facilitate an effective and efficient extension work at this grass root level.

That young farmers organizations and clubs be organized in every localities by the extension personnel.

Young farmers organizations have been neglected for many years in the agricultural extension work in developing countries. Organizing young farmers clubs and developing educational programs for them will definitely help the younger generation to become involved in extension activities. This could lead to development of life skills among youth to function as individuals and as potential clientele of extension education programs.

Finally, many of the possible recommendations given to improve the agricultural extension in developing countries are based upon personnel experiences and observations of the Cooperative Extension Service in the United States. In my opinion, the Cooperative Extension Service has the capability to demonstrate to the developing countries what the purpose of the extension are; how it is organized; how resources are allocated and utilized; how programs are developed, implemented and evaluated; who is reached and why; what are the clientele reactions to programs; and what support is needed for the extension organization. If institutions and consultants working with developing countries would focus on the questions just highlighted, the needed changes in the agricultural extension would move a head more rapidly, generating a stronger agricultural sector in these countries. Furthermore, extension personnel and educators in the U.S. can assist in this sharing of ideas by volunteering information or responding to requests of visitors from developing countries who desire a first hand knowledge of how the extension service really works at the local, state, federal levels. In effect, the U.S. Cooperative Extension Service at all levels has the opportunity to serve as a motivating agent for the improvement of agricultural extension in developing countries.

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